



Press Release



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**Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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For Immediate Release:
November 9, 2005

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Conyers Calls for Retention of Sunset Provisions in PATRIOT Act

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Conyers, Jr. issued the following statement today regarding the motion to instruct conferees on the Patriot Act:

“If we have learned one thing over the last four years, it is that the Justice Department feels it is above accountability to this Congress in relation to the so called “war on terror,” and that even we, the Committee of jurisdiction, will not get answers to our questions unless the Justice Department is compelled to come before us and justify its use of the more dangerous provisions of the PATRIOT Act.

For four years the Administration said it couldn’t talk about its use of the PATRIOT Act. The Administration claimed that any public accounting would put our nation at risk of further terror attacks.

However, in April of this year, when it became clear that many members of this House and in the Senate would not be acquiesced by hollow reassurance, numbers and anecdotes suddenly became available. Apparently, the Administration chooses to selectively declassify numbers and examples when it is politically convenient for it to do so.

The only reason we got any answers at all was because of the sunsets.

We are constitutionally mandated to conduct oversight. We cannot do that when all we get is sporadic reports from the Justice Department and limited anecdotes. That is all we will ever get from the Justice Department if we let them make permanent all of these sections.

Anecdotes are not oversight. Non-terror examples of how a provision has been used has no bearing on whether they should be renewed, and as this bill has it, renewed as-is and without any new protections. We are sure the Justice Department can find one or two feel-good stories for each provision of the U.S. code, but that is not the point. Oversight is about deciding whether, *on the whole and after examining the totality of the circumstances*, a provision’s usefulness outweighs the privacy and other rights it infringes upon. Regrettably, the Justice Department has not given us enough information to make that determination.

My friends across the aisle will tell you that we had 12 hearings. We did, but only because of the sunsets. Those hearings did not answer all of our questions; they just scratched the surface about how the PATRIOT Act has been used. We need to keep sunsets in this bill to ensure that the Justice Department continues to return to the hill every several years to account for how its using its broad new authority.”

##JUD-109-11/09/05##